


SUKANYA

Sukanya, a princess, curiously pokes at two bright sparks in an anthill. She is horrified when she realizes that the sparks are actually the eyes of the great Sage Chyavana. He is blinded and a blight descends upon the entire kingdom. There is respite only when Sukanya agrees to leave her family and her royal home to marry the sage and serve him faithfully.

This version is taken from the Mahabharata, but references to Sukanya's integrity appear in the Bhagawat Purana, the Devi Purana and the Rigveda. She remains faithful to Chyavana, eventually shaming even the heavenly twins, the Ashwini Kumaras.


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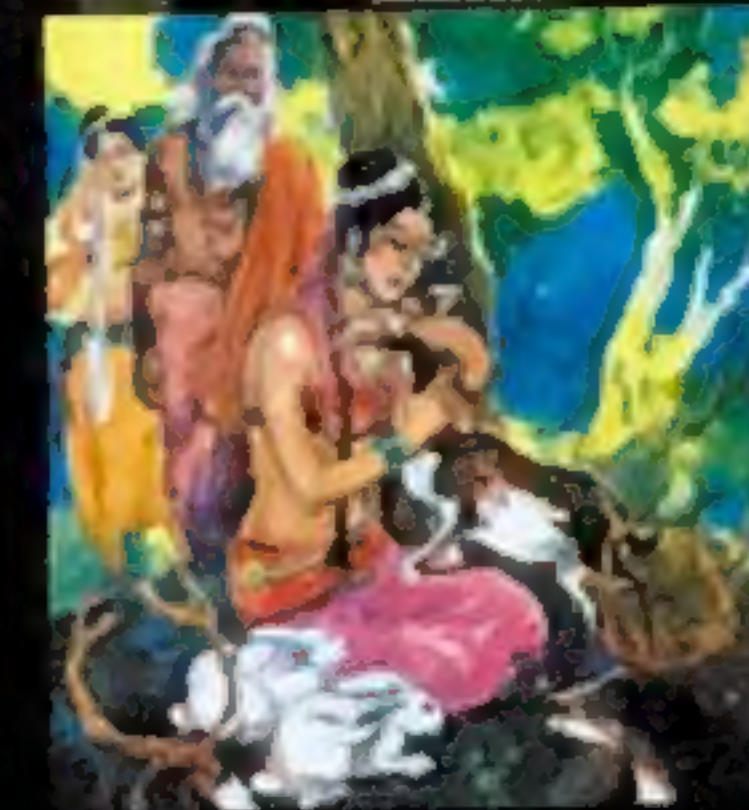
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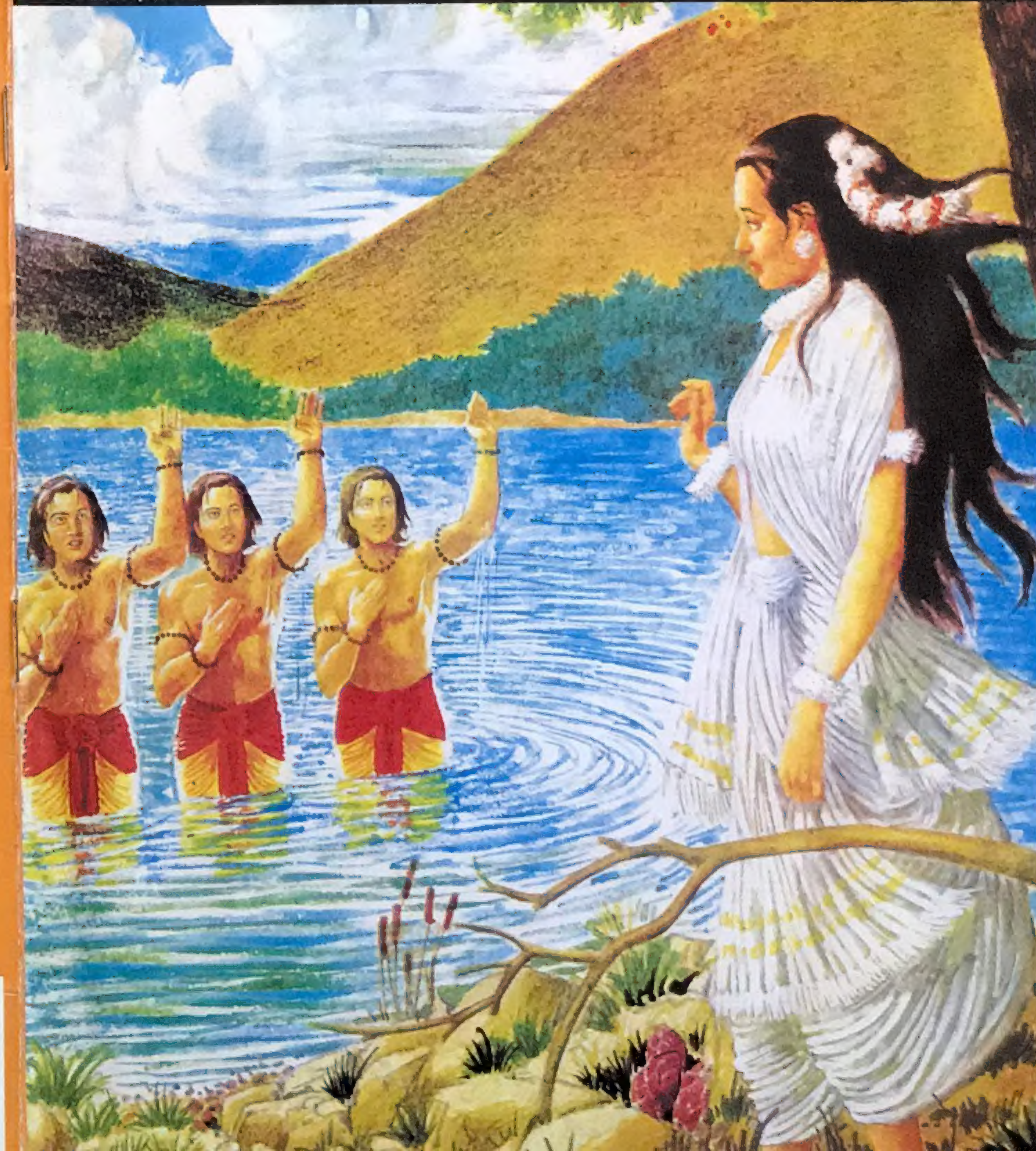
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SUKANYA

THE PRINCESS WHO MARRIED A SAGE

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SUKANYA

LONG LONG AGO, THERE LIVED A SAGE CALLED CHYAVANA. HE PERFORMED HIS PENANCES AND AUSTERITIES AND MEDITATED NEAR A LAKE IN A JUNGLE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF SHARYAATI'S KINGDOM.

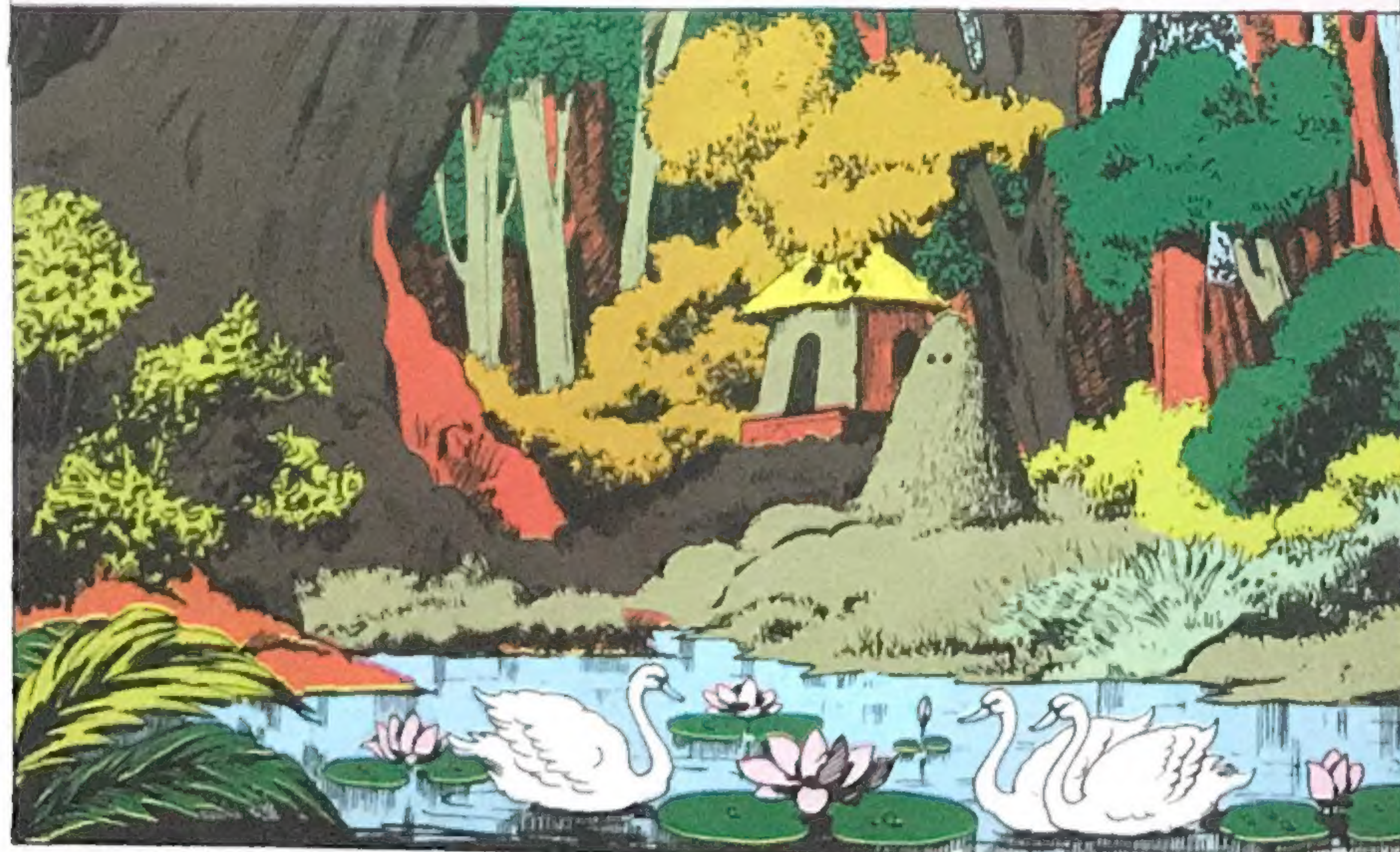
DAYS...



...MONTHS...

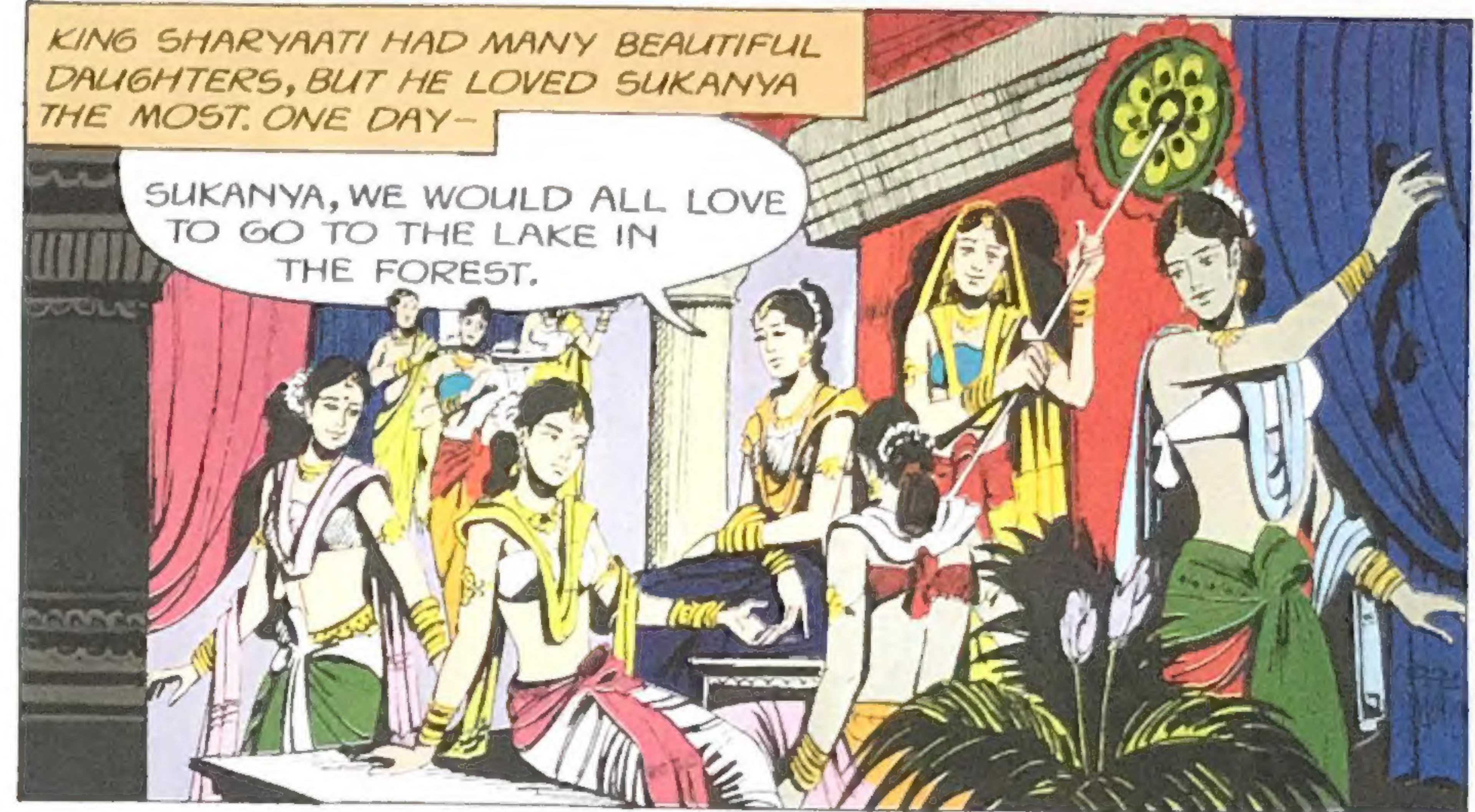


...AND YEARS ROLLED BY. CHYAVANA CONTINUED TO MEDITATE. HE WAS COMPLETELY COVERED BY AN ANTHILL BUT BEING DEEPLY IMMERSED IN MEDITATION, HE WAS NOT AWARE OF ANYTHING.



KING SHARYAATI HAD MANY BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS, BUT HE LOVED SUKANYA THE MOST. ONE DAY-

SUKANYA, WE WOULD ALL LOVE TO GO TO THE LAKE IN THE FOREST.



IF YOU ASK FATHER, HE WILL CERTAINLY TAKE US.



SUKANYA, PLEASE.

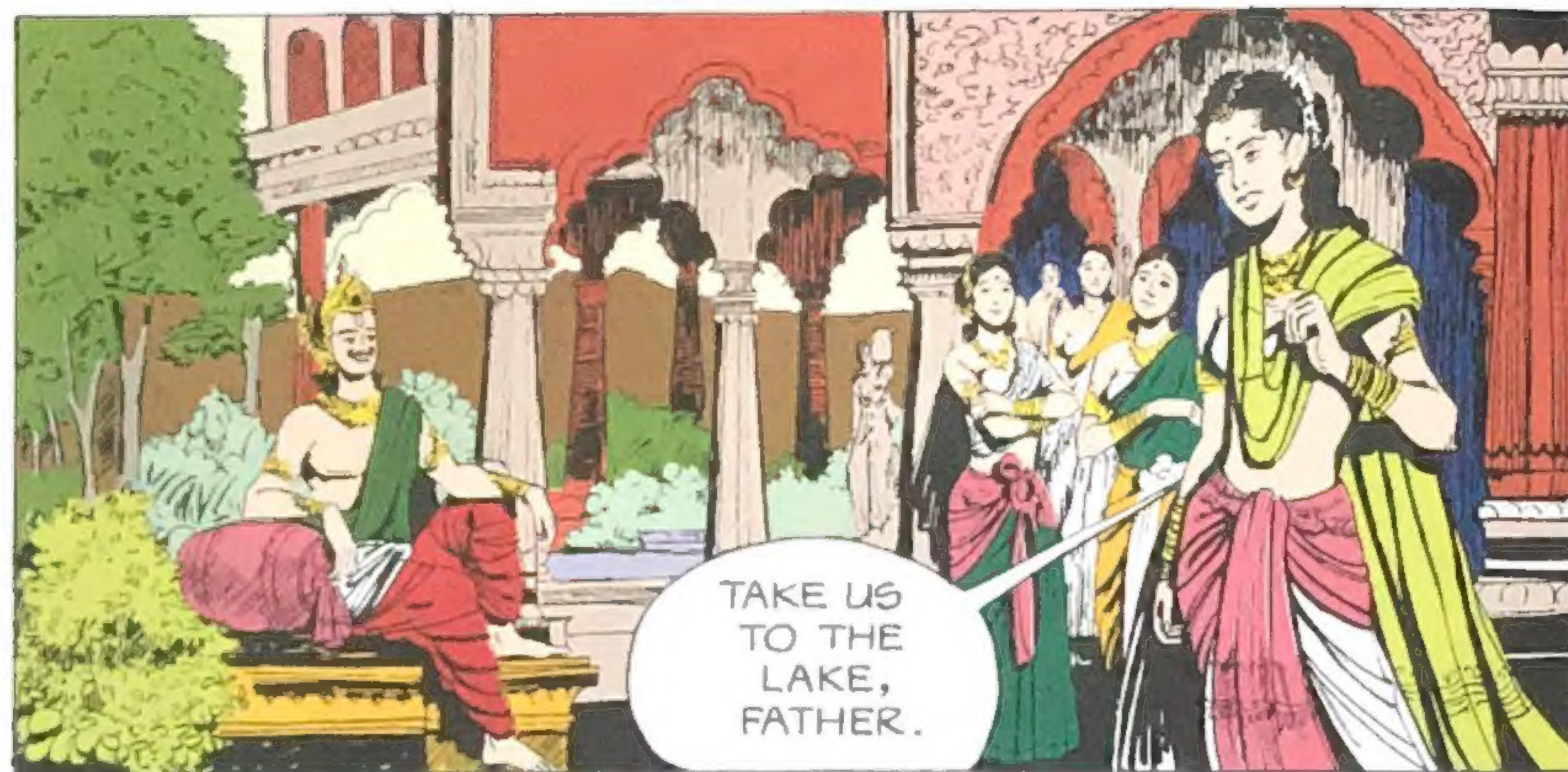
SUKANYA WENT TO SHARYAATI.

FATHER! WILL YOU PLEASE GRANT MY WISH?

HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE IS. SHE SHALL MARRY ONLY THE MOST HANDSOME, ACCOMPLISHED, PRINCE IN THE LAND.

CERTAINLY, MY CHILD. WHAT IS IT?





THEY LEFT FOR THE LAKE FOLLOWED BY A LARGE GROUP OF ATTENDANTS.

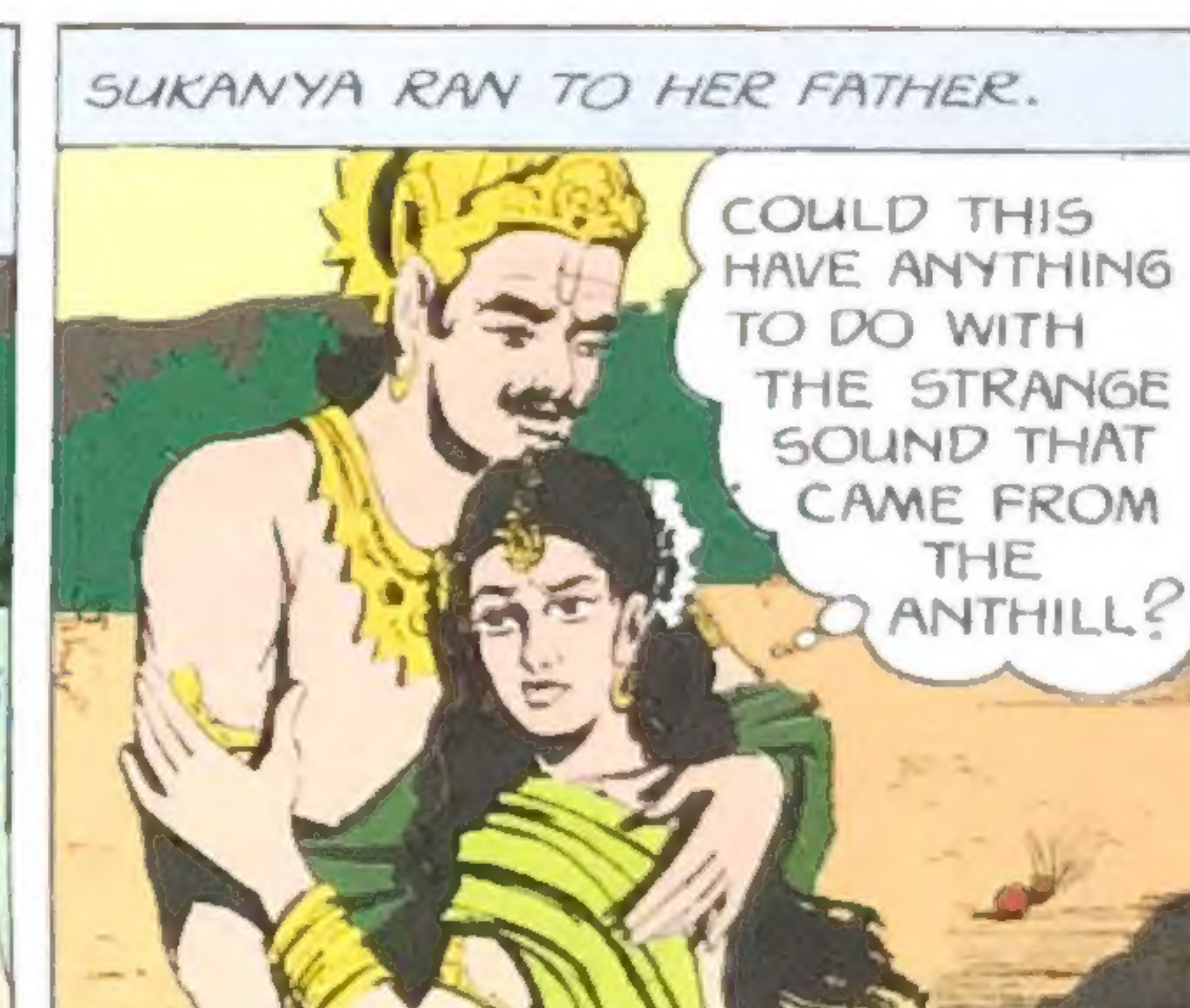


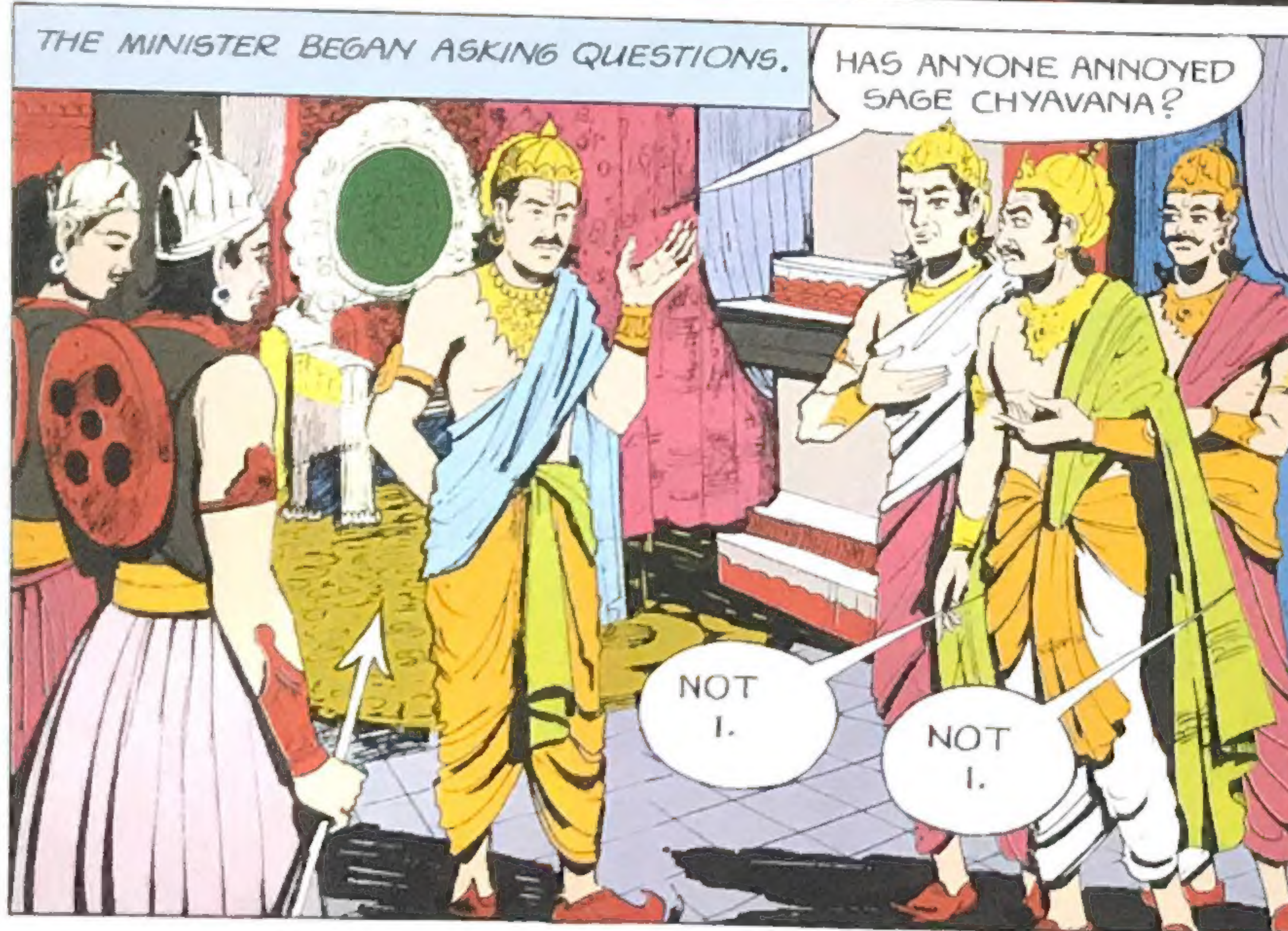
SUDDENLY SOMETHING IN THE DISTANCE ATTRACTED HER ATTENTION.



SHE CAME NEARER.

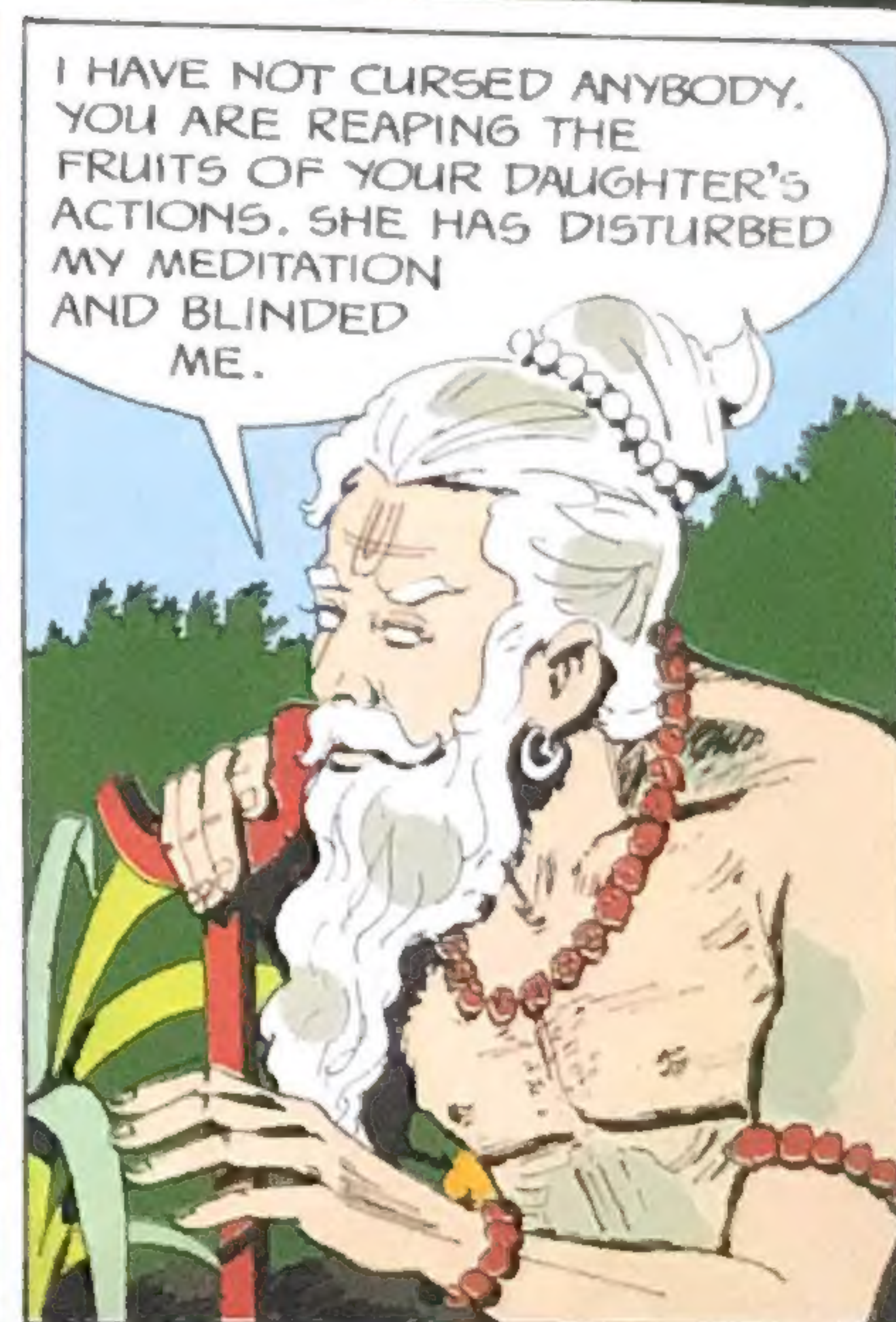
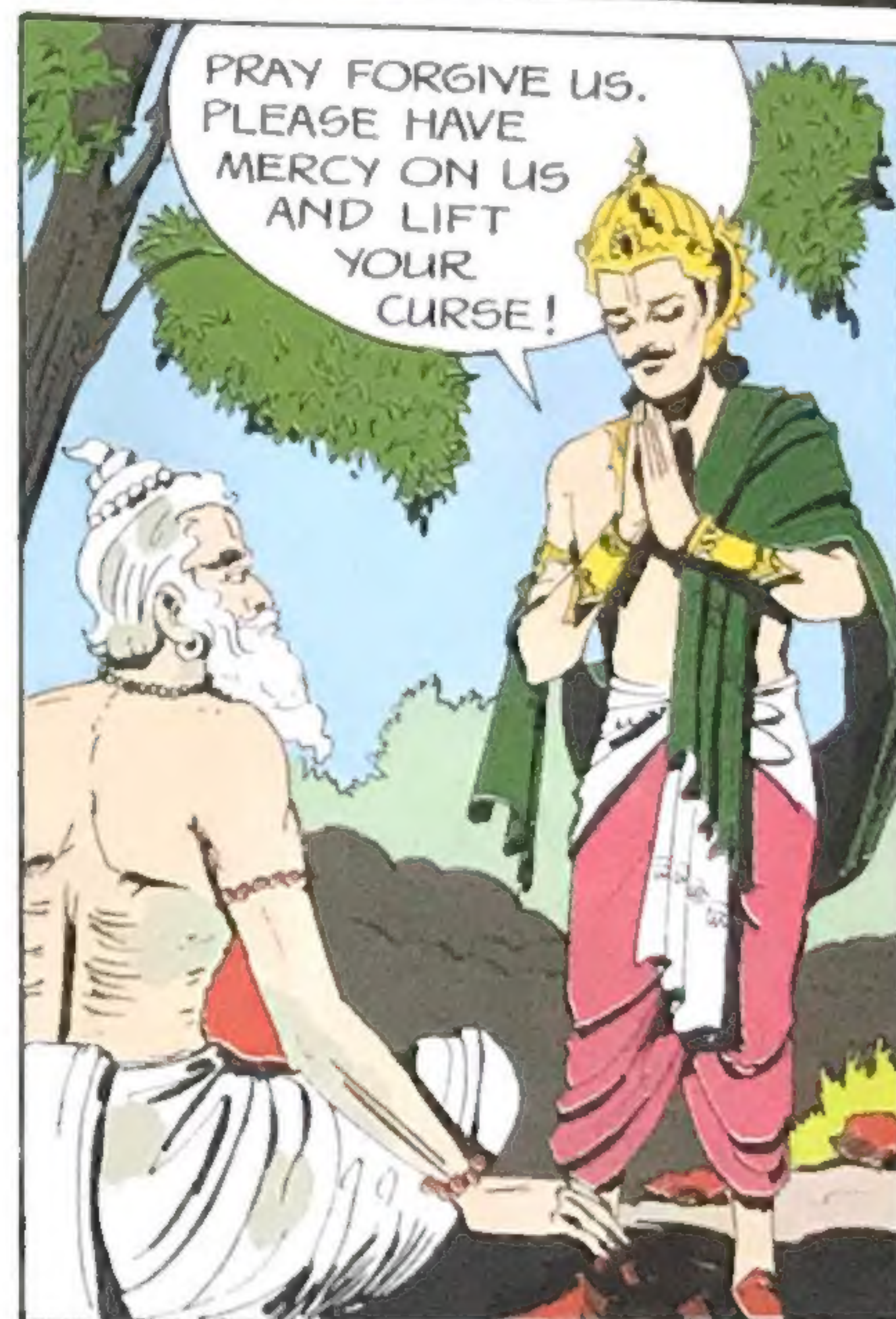








WHEN THE KING SAW THE SAGE WITH PORTIONS OF ANTHILL, STILL STICKING TO HIS BODY -







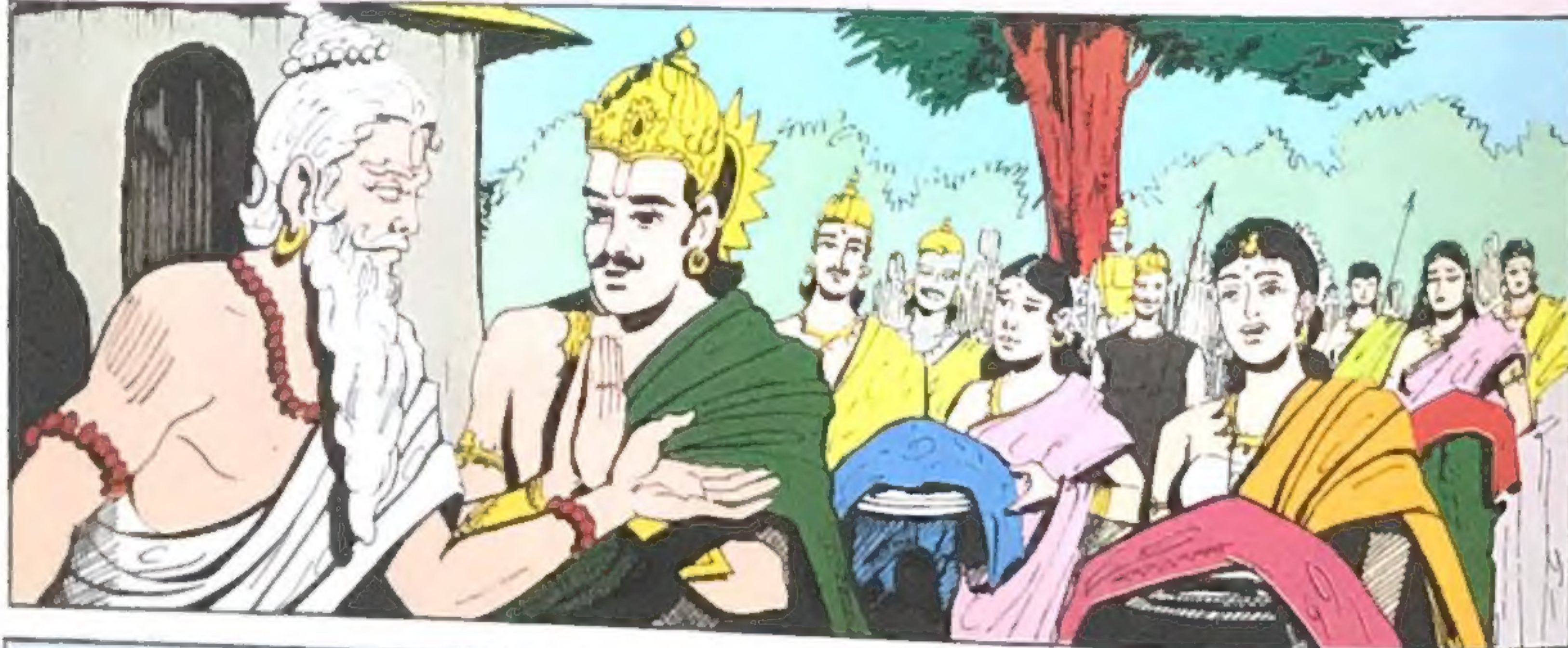
AND SUKANYA TOOK AN OATH.



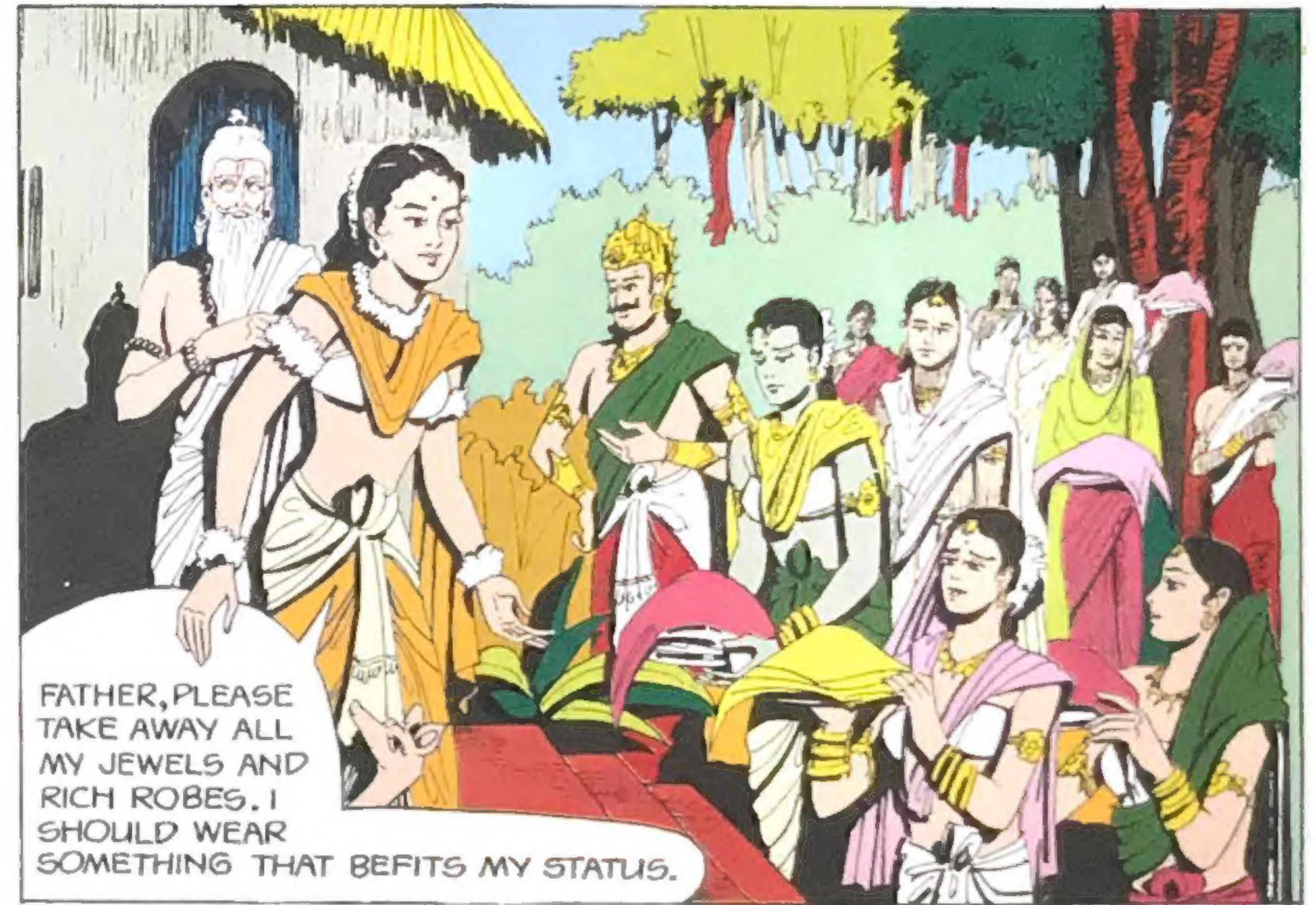
THEN SHARYAATI, SUKANYA AND THE MINISTER, FOLLOWED BY A GROUP OF SERVANTS CARRYING RICH PRESENTS FOR THE BRIDEGROOM, PROCEEDED TO THE LAKE.



SAGE CHYAVANA REFUSED THE ROYAL GIFTS...



...AND AGREED TO ACCEPT ONLY SUKANYA.



FATHER, PLEASE TAKE AWAY ALL MY JEWELS AND RICH ROBES. I SHOULD WEAR SOMETHING THAT BEFITS MY STATUS.

LEAVING SUKANYA TO THE CARE OF THE SAGE, THE KING RETURNED TO HIS PALACE WITH A HEAVY HEART.



SUKANYA COMPLETELY DEDICATED HERSELF TO THE SERVICE OF HER HUSBAND. SHE PICKED THE FLOWERS FOR HIS RITUALS AND HELPED HIM WITH HIS YAGNAS.

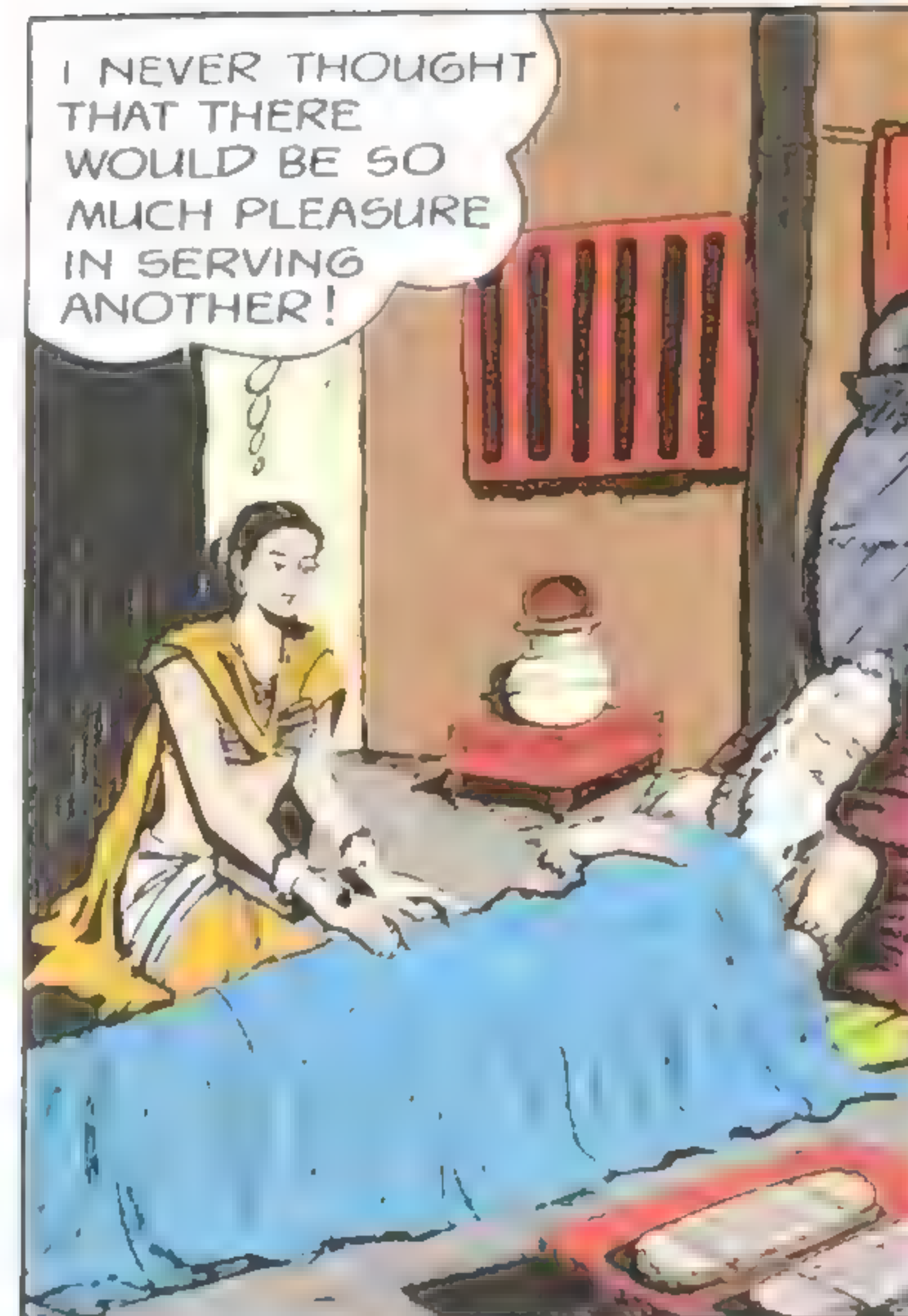


SHE FED HIM...



...AND WASHED HIS HANDS.

I NEVER THOUGHT THAT THERE WOULD BE SO MUCH PLEASURE IN SERVING ANOTHER!



SLEEP WELL, MY LORD! I SHALL WATCH OVER YOU.



MAY THE SAGE BE MY HUSBAND IN ALL MY FUTURE BIRTHS.



ONLY WHEN SHE WAS SURE THAT HER HUSBAND WAS DEEP IN SLUMBER DID SHE HERSELF SLEEP.



AND SO THE YEARS PASSED. ONE DAY THE ASHWINI TWINS HAPPENED TO PASS BY. SUKANYA WAS RETURNING HOME FROM THE LAKE AFTER A BATH.



WE ARE THE ASHWINI TWINS, PHYSICIANS TO THE GODS.

WILL THEY BE ABLE TO RESTORE MY HUSBAND'S SIGHT? I WONDER.

FAIR MAIDEN, TELL US WHO YOU ARE, ARE YOU A GODDESS OR A HUMAN BEING? ARE YOU ALONE IN THIS LONELY FOREST?



WITH THAT HOPE IN HER HEART SUKANYA STOPPED TO ANSWER THEM.

I AM SUKANYA, THE WIFE OF SAGE CHYAVANA. BUT ALAS! HE IS BLIND.



SURELY YOUR FATHER MUST BE A CRUEL MAN TO HAVE GIVEN YOU IN MARRIAGE TO A BLIND, OLD SAGE.

YES, INDEED. HE MUST BE MAD TOO.

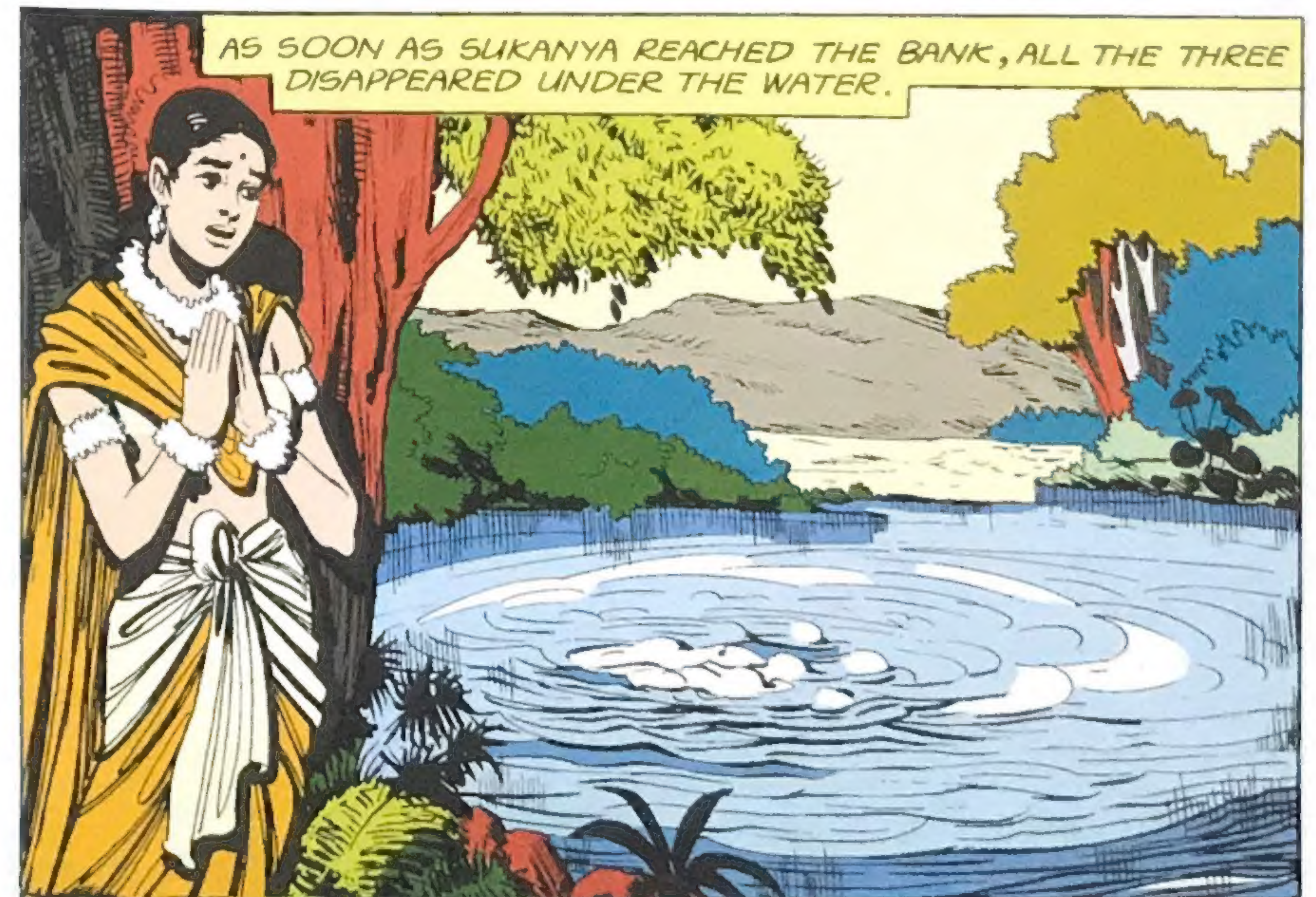
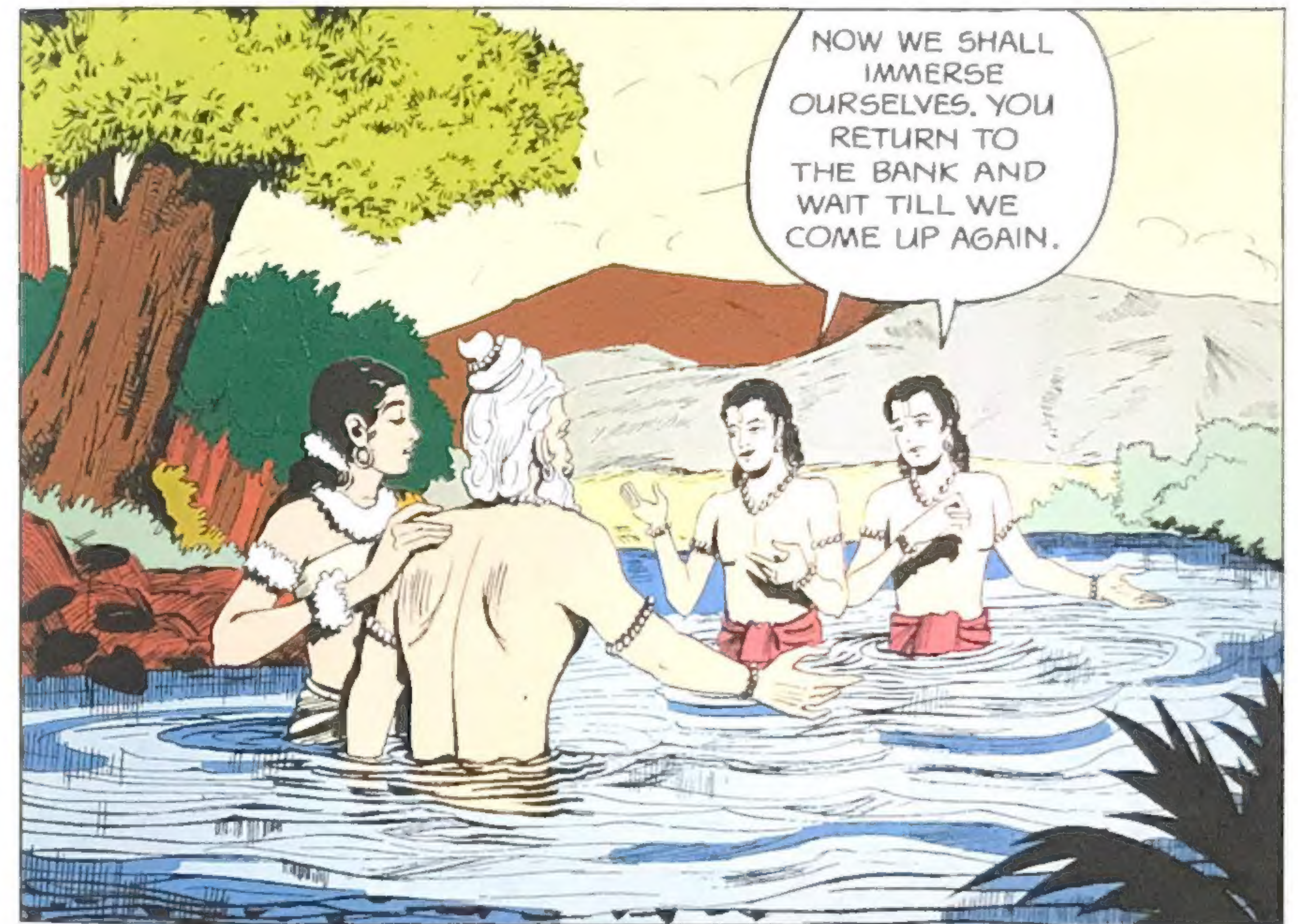
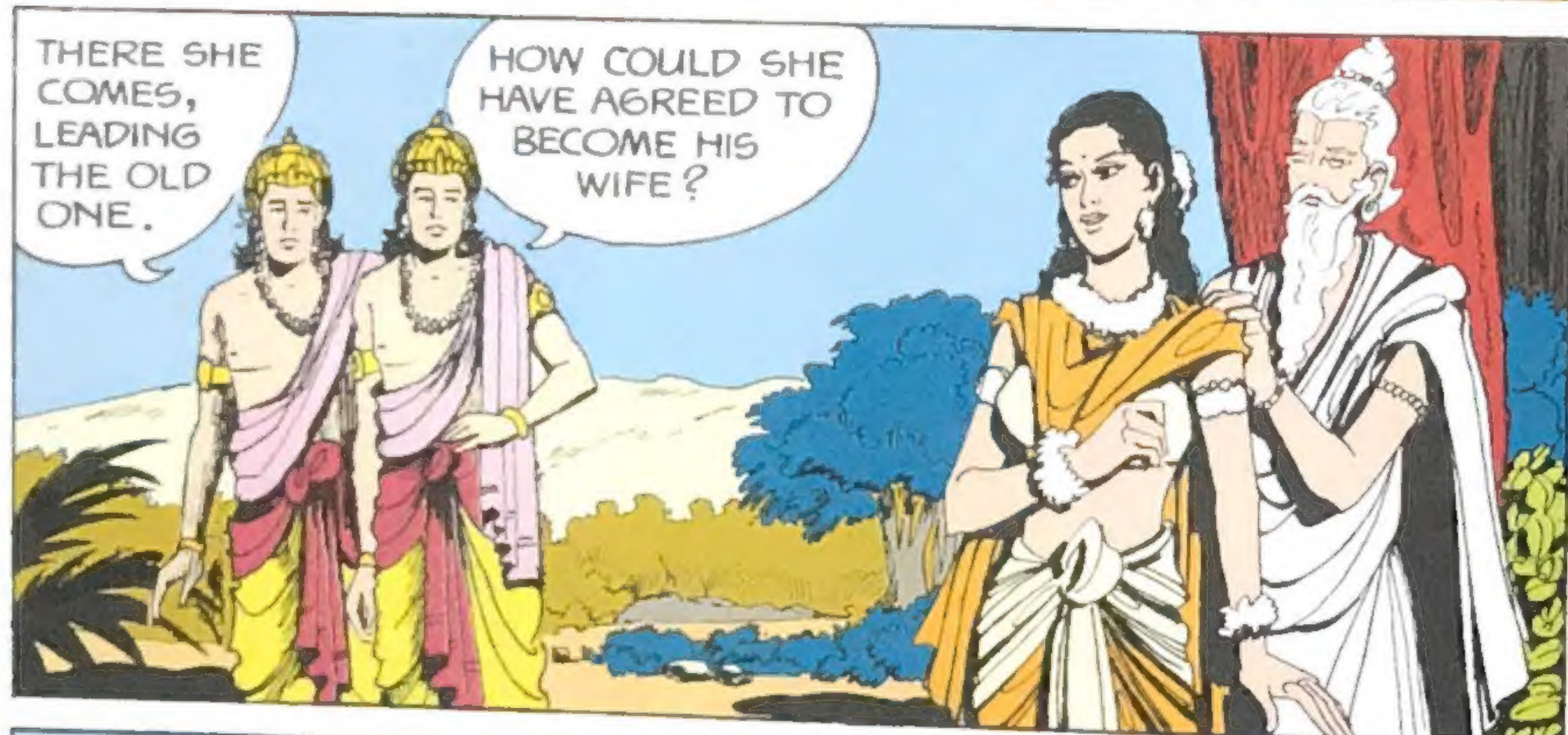


WASTE NOT YOUR YOUTH ANY MORE!

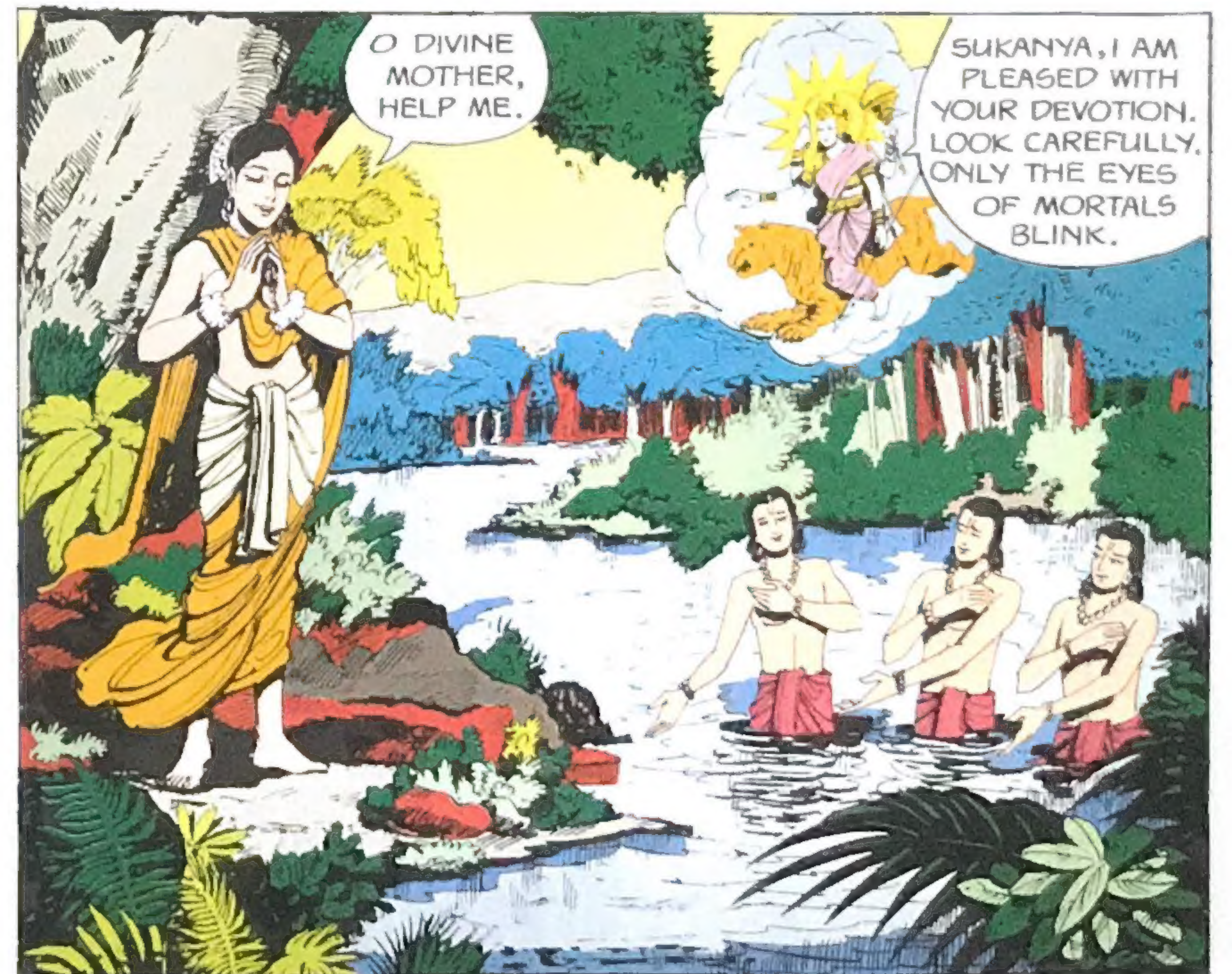
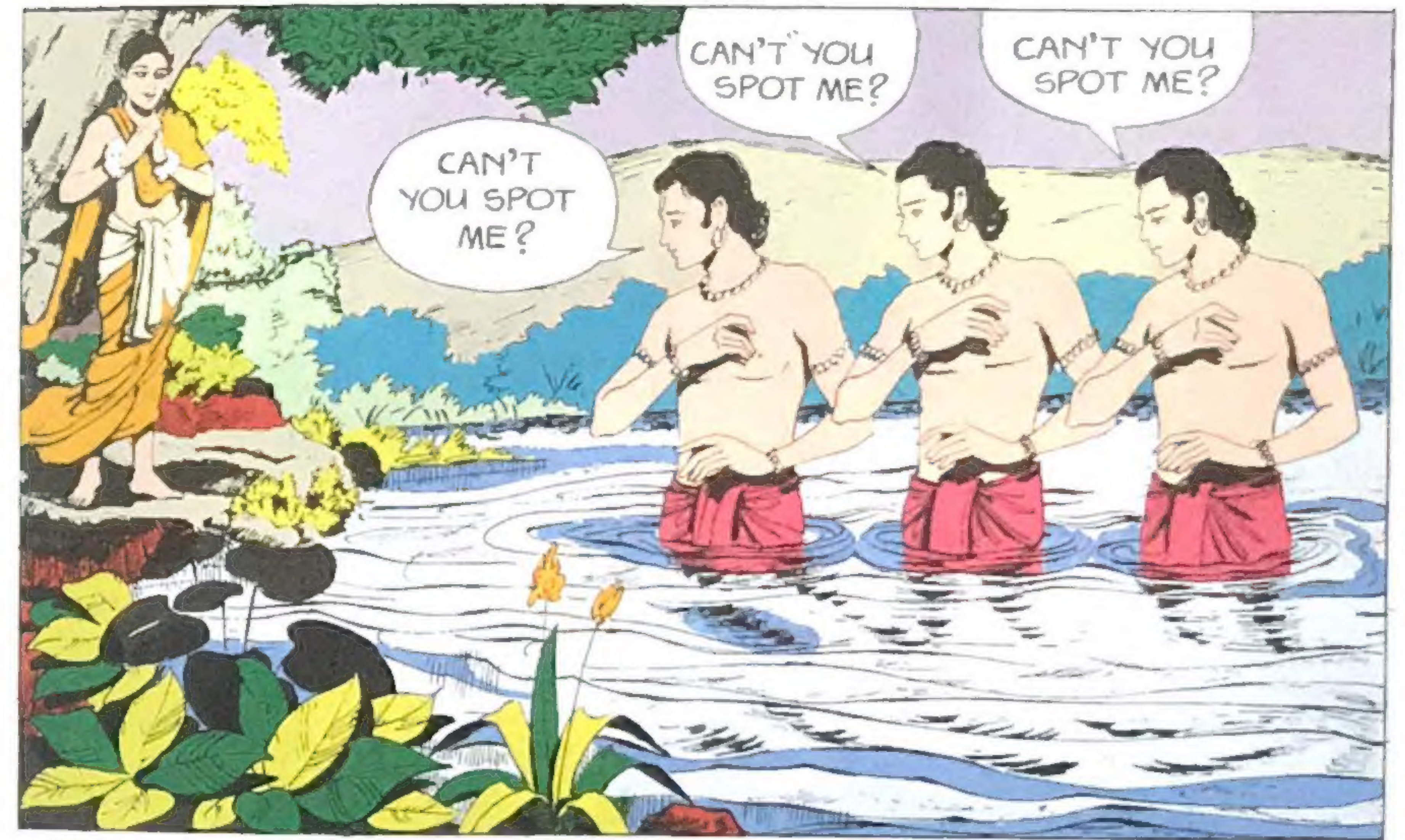
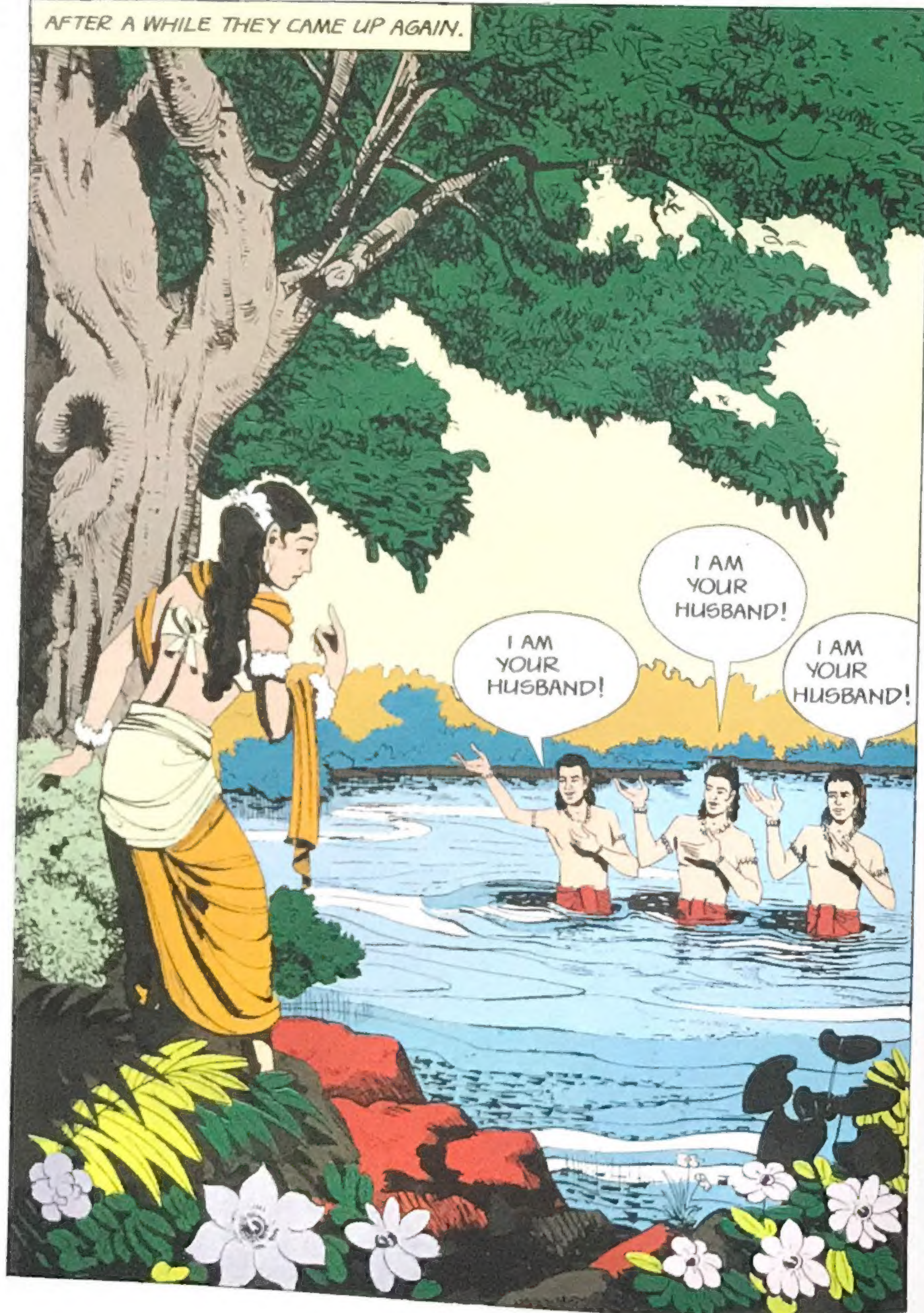
MARRY ONE OF US AND BE HAPPY!



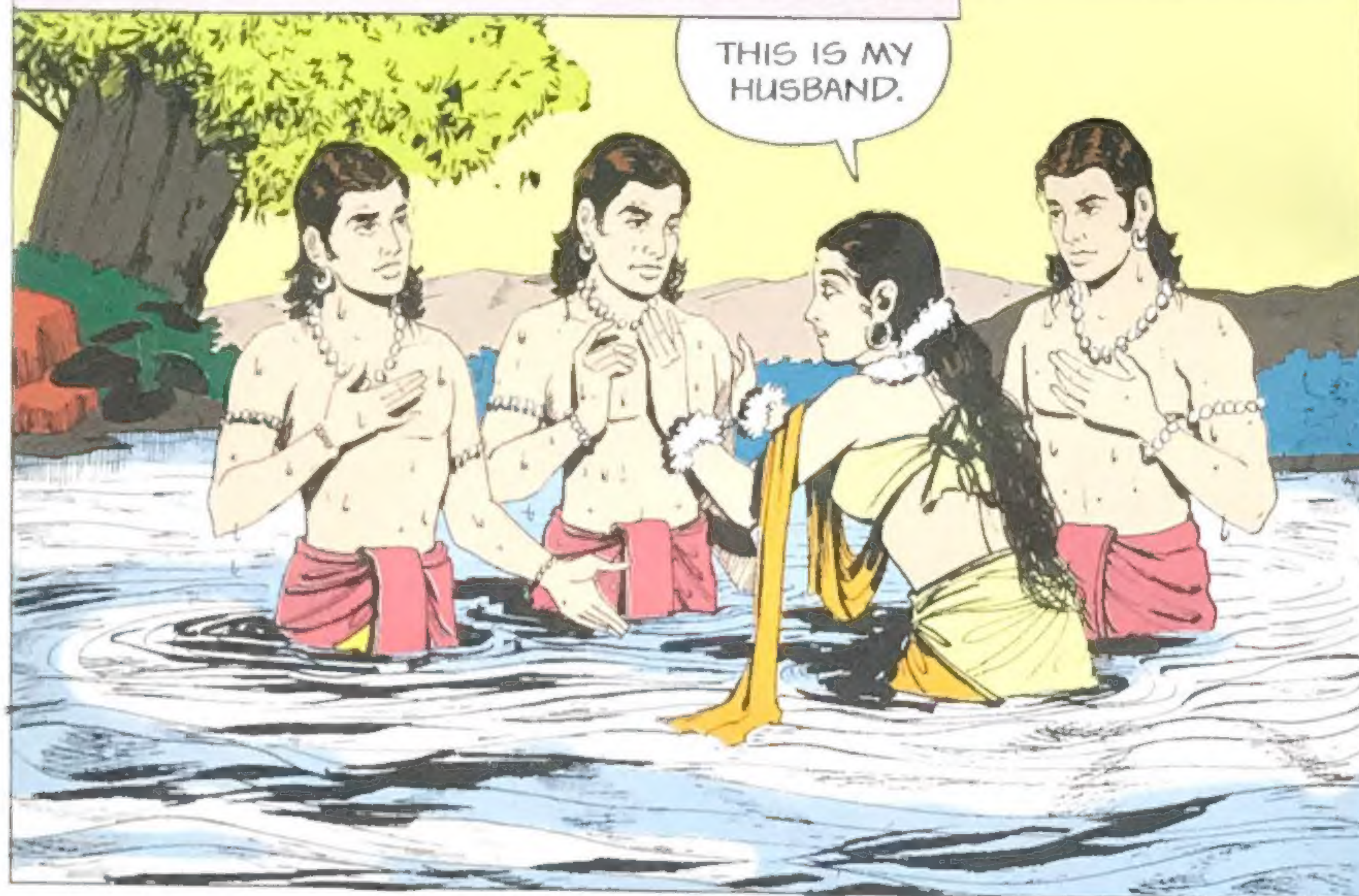
BACK AT THE ASHRAM, SUKANYA TOLD HER HUSBAND ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED.



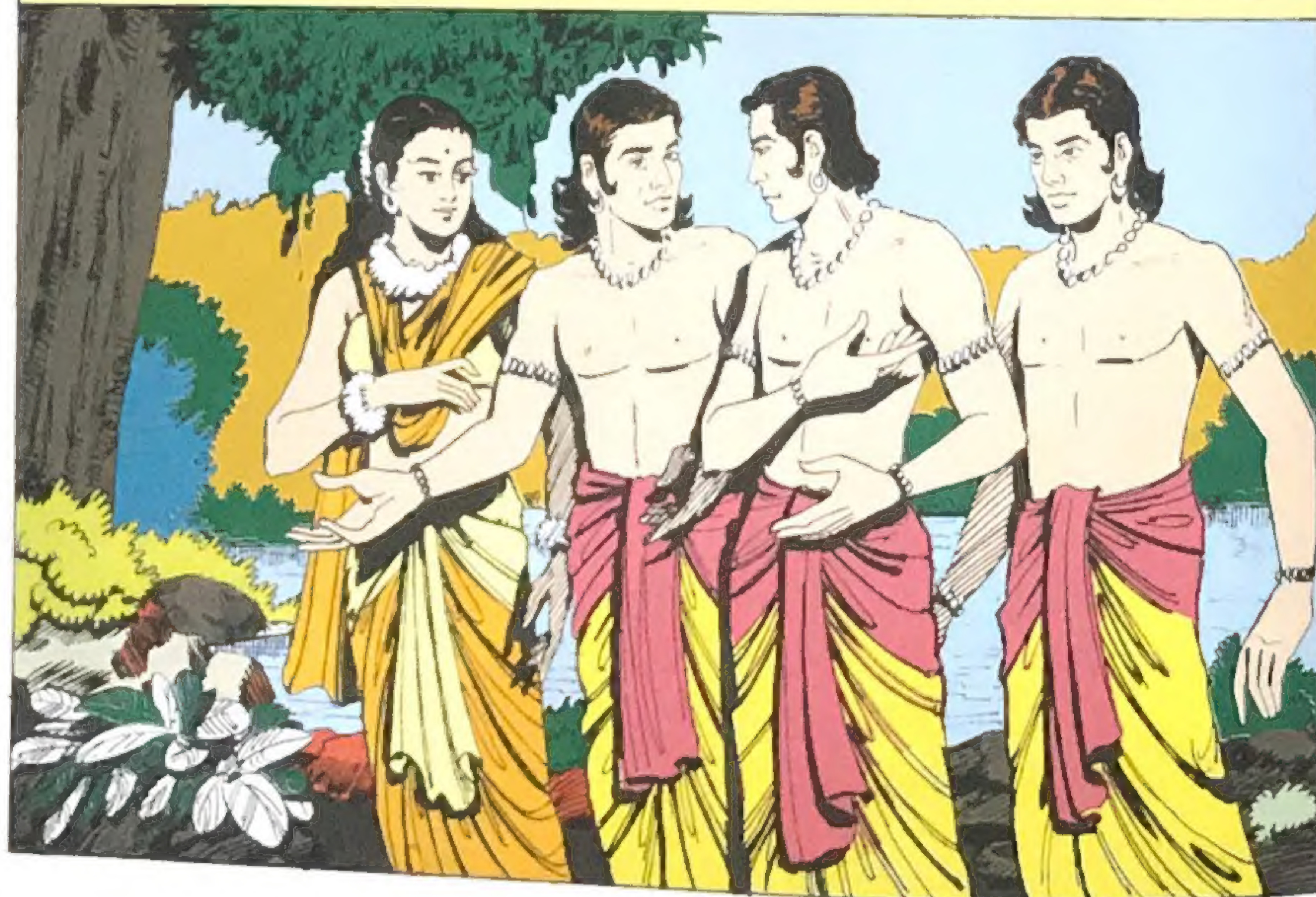
AFTER A WHILE THEY CAME UP AGAIN.



SUKANYA LOOKED CAREFULLY AT THEM FOR A WHILE AND SAW THAT THE EYES OF THE ONE IN THE CENTRE BLINKED.



HER GUESS WAS RIGHT. ALL FOUR OF THEM CAME OUT OF THE LAKE.



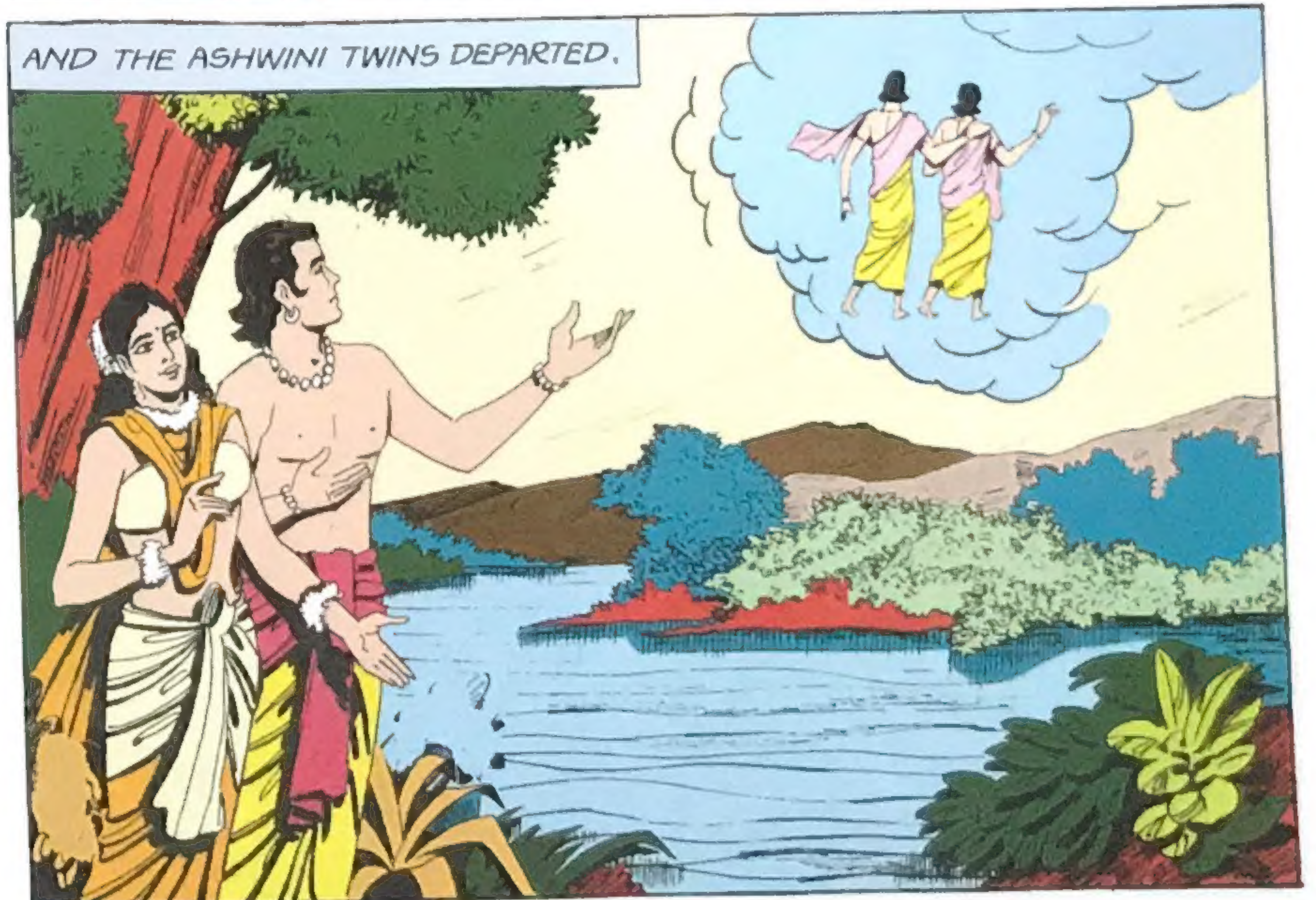
ON THE BANK THE TWINS AND CHYAVANA BLESSED SUKANYA.

SUKANYA, YOU, A CHASTE WOMAN, HAVE HUMBLLED THE VERY GODS!

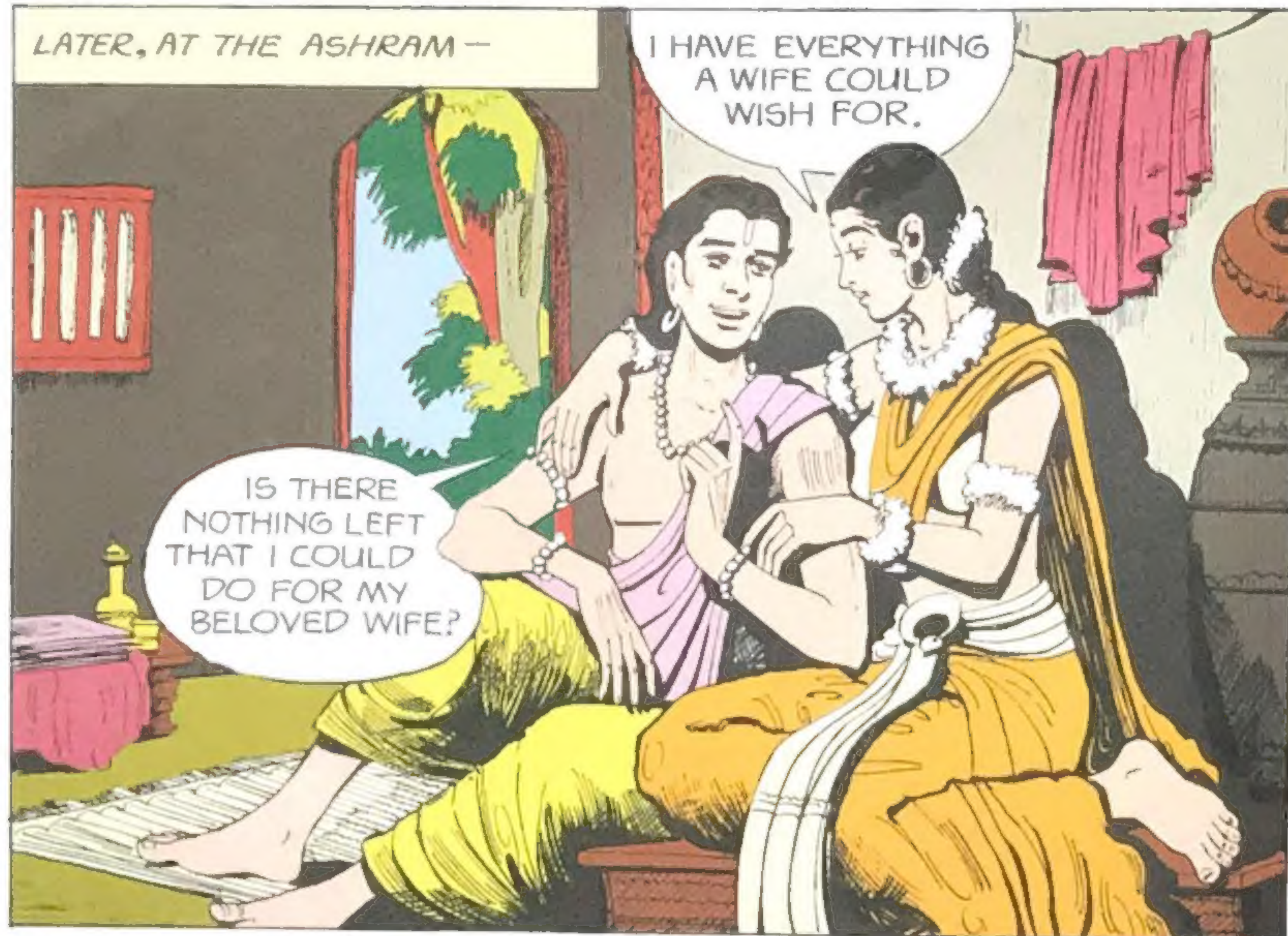
YOUR GLORY SHALL LIVE FOR EVER.



AND THE ASHWINI TWINS DEPARTED.



LATER, AT THE ASHRAM —



I HAVE EVERYTHING
A WIFE COULD
WISH FOR.

IS THERE
NOTHING LEFT
THAT I COULD
DO FOR MY
BELOVED WIFE?



THERE IS
SOMETHING,
MY LORD!

WHAT IS
IT?
I WILL...



I LONG TO SEE
MY FATHER. HOW
HAPPY HE
WOULD BE TO
SEE US NOW!

HE IS
ALREADY
ON HIS
WAY!

WHEN SHARYAATI CAME —



SUKANYA, YOU
HAVE MADE ME
PROUD! NAY! YOU HAVE
MADE ALL WOMANKIND
PROUD!!

AS LONG AS
THE SUN AND THE
MOON EXIST, LET
HER BE KNOWN AS
"SATI
SUKANYA"